

3rd Midwest Urban Recycling Forum
May 17-18, 2007
Ann Arbor, Michigan
Discussion Notes

Thursday, May 17th

Welcome & Introductions

Matthew Flechter, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

Nancy Hawkins, Michigan Recycling Coalition

A “Michigan Recycles” brochure is available which ties economic development to recycling (see http://www.michiganrecycles.org/a_projects_measure.shtml)

City of Ann Arbor Environmental Initiatives

Honorable John Hieftje, Mayor, City of Ann Arbor

The city is trying to make money on recycling. The city government seeks to be running on at least 30% renewable energy by 2010 (currently at 18%). Fleets will run on 20% renewable fuels by 2015 (i.e., biodiesel). Switched to LED lighting on Main Street and incorporated energy saving agenda into budget discussions. The city received a grant to “solarize” the farmers market and parking lots. Ann Arbor is also investigating wind opportunities in Washtenaw County beginning with rooftop windmills and the Phoenix Institute. Concept will involve buying development rights to farmland. Currently bottling tap water and encouraging refilling vs. buying new bottles. Local agriculture grown in “greenbelt”

Melinda Uerling, Director, Recycle Ann Arbor

An overview of Ann Arbor’s recycling program was provided. A contract to run the curbside collection program in Ann Arbor is largest component of program. The contract includes incentives to increase volume of recyclables recovered.

Summary of Trends & Issues - Urban Recycling Programs

Jacob Hassan, U.S. EPA Region 5

An overview of the importance of capturing ways of communicating the importance of recycling and maintaining the momentum was presented, with a focus on energy savings and greenhouse gas reduction. Several tools were introduced which can be found in the “Forum Resources” document.

Forum 1: Measurement, Communication and Justification of Programs

Overview

The goal of this discussion was to present the challenges of justifying the retention and/or expansion of recycling as well as successful strategies for maintaining momentum. In addition, effective measurement, tracking and communication of results were presented and discussed.

Bryan Weinert, City of Ann Arbor Systems Planning

An overview of the City’s outreach and communication strategy was provided and two handouts were provided documenting program justification. The importance of advocacy group activity in the 80’s was emphasized as being very helpful in inspiring change and building constituencies among different factions in the city.

Jim Frey, Resource Recycling Systems Inc.

The importance of conducting surveys to capture the sentiment and suggestions from the community was emphasized for helping to justify moving programs along. A key question is how to take an operating program

and move it forward and help it make sense to local elected officials. One strategy that has been used has been to apply financial performance measures to program. A discussion was held with elected officials in Ann Arbor to add compost capacity with elected officials and justify private contractor bringing in outside material to better the financial performance. Also, receiving revenue from the sale of recyclables and documenting savings from avoiding landfilling. These metrics have assisted in justification and tracking in a way that makes sense to decision makers. Additionally, tracking the impact and effectiveness of education/outreach resources in the community can help document program effectiveness. To show community benefit, Recyclebank is one program that is being piloted in Philadelphia PA and Wilmington DE. Each totter cart has a bar code and an automated collection vehicle reads it each pickup, recording information on recycling. Residents can then refer to website to see review balances, cost savings and redeem coupons for products at popular stores and restaurants. In some cases, residents can choose vendor for coupons. Recycling tonnages have greatly increased as a result of the program. The software can provide data by block as to who is participating. RRSI is currently working with city of Toledo to assess the feasibility of implementing Recyclebank.

Mike Csapo, Resource Recovery and Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County

RRRASOC is using the Re-Track program to measure and document recycling rates and participation. (see www.re-track.com). Re-Track is an online, web-based database system (must pay for by subscription) which is easy to use and comprehensive. This system cuts down on data entry time and compiling information. The use of the data is much easier and reporting is more efficient.

Question & Answer Session

Q: How to deal with overloading bins with non-recyclable material in Recyclebank program?

A: The contamination level in the bin can be tracked.

Q: Does Recyclebank foster consumerism, incentivizing individuals to purchase more and generate more trash?

A: It doesn't necessarily encourage people to over consume, but it does provide incentives for people to recycle the material they generate.

C: Recyclebank sponsors are typically large stores where people are already purchasing products. The program just creates incentives for these. As residents realize those benefits, word of mouth acts as another tool to increase recycling participation.

C: There has been discussion about Recyclebank being introduced into wards and neighborhoods as opposed to the individual households, which will provide positive results for a whole community instead of individual households.

C: The online Recyclebank report allows individuals to gather information on the communities recycling program. This disseminates the information to citizens and spreads the word on the success and benefit of recycling, helping to market recycling to others who may be unable to use the internet or cannot read.

C: Another cost effective way to promote recycling is to insert a flyer in with tax notices.

C: Recycle Ann Arbor is looking at the issue of "How do we brand ourselves?" We are looking at how to push our constituents to motivate people to recycle and do so properly.

Q: How do you market to people who don't have a computer or can't read?

A: The social marketing concept is very exciting because it may give us an avenue to explore human interaction to pass along the message.

C: Detroit demographics are very diverse, when we try to enforce codes, we have to find a policy that is applicable and fair for all. Many people cannot read and don't speak English. For drop off centers, we might be able to scan a residents ID to provide an incentive like Recyclebank. We need something to take back to our city where we can get people excited.

C: The trash collection could be discounted if they pledge to recycle their materials.

C: The City of Cleveland is financially strapped. A full efficiency analysis was conducted on their system. Used an electronic routing system, improved the efficiency of the garbage pickup which allowed for the savings to be invested back into their automated trucking system.

Forum 2: Optimizing Collection & Recovery

Overview

Panelists provided examples and discussed strategies on how they are maximizing collection and participation in recycling programs. Topics covered included minimizing impacts of scavenging, innovative contracting clauses, transportation issues and optimizing drop-off programs.

Mike Czuprenski, Southeast Oakland Co. Resource Recovery Authority

Bob Brickner, Gershman, Brickner & Bratton, Inc.

GBB has been working with SOCCRA since 1989, which includes the Rochester Hills composting facility and a MRF which opened in '92. An RFP was developed to procure a 20 year total life agreement with long term service needs for member communities. It was not an invitation to bid, only a request for proposals. Through the process a 16% savings was realized. An FCA (fuel cost adjustment) was included that totals 4-12% of total fees.

Q: What were the major differences that allowed the smaller haulers to accept the RFP solicited?

A: With Union labor, you cannot project the cost 5-10 years out. Also, larger corporations were unwilling to allow SOCCRA to have the option to pick up the contract extensions without input from the hauler. The larger companies have set profit margins they look as opposed to the overall revenue.

Q: Did any of the DPW's bid for the hauling contract?

A: No, most DPW's have been out of the hauling business for several years.

C: One community was paying \$28/ton for waste management to dispose of trash in the system and under the new contract with SOCCRA is paying \$18.85/ton.

C: The City of Cleveland runs its own program with about 20 staff. There are limited commercial pick ups. They didn't want to have to have people drive significant distances to drop-off centers, so located front load dumpsters at 14 recreational centers throughout the city, which are unmonitored and open 24 hours. They have dual stream containers.

C: The City of Columbus has a subscription curbside program with free yard waste collection. Administration in the city will not consider putting a fee on refuse collection. Recently, a fee has been considered with a rebate program to reduce the set fee.

C: Rosedale Recycles (a 501(c)3 non-profit which uses donations to support their program) maintains a drop-off site for a once a month event in Rosedale. Between 150-200 households per month participate.

C: Recycle Detroit currently collects 40,000 lbs/mo, up from 2,000 lbs when they were Midtown Recycling. They operate with a 53' trailer to collect material, similar to reverse grocery shopping. The Institute for Local self Reliance has identified this option for Detroit to get their recycling program up and operational.

Friday, May 18th

Forum 3: Multi-Unit Family Housing

Overview

Panelists presented information on the mechanics of effective collections from multi-unit family housing, along with case studies.

[Tom McMurtrie, City of Ann Arbor Systems Planning](#)

An overview of Ann Arbor's efforts to establish, support and promote recycling in multi-unit family housing was provided.

[Anna Collinson, Resource Recycling Systems, Inc.](#)

Challenges to multi-family programs include lack of staff to oversee program and collection points that need constant attention. One problem is that property managers turn over often. The service provider in one complex has constant service issues (contamination not addressed). The city's code enforcement department was writing tickets for unsightly dumpster areas. Made change from assigning responsibility to site owners/operators to designating site "champions" to look after areas. Also, changed from single stream to source separated. In July '07 SOCCRA was able to reduce service contracts in Royal Oak. Solutions included placing new labels and increasing contacts for sites.

C: Teaching the importance of recycling to children at school can translate well to families with language barriers. NY has a very structured ordinance to help facilitate and enforce recycling in multi-unit dwellings. Marketing to landlords and building operators is key to ensuring the success of multi-family dwelling program. Ensuring buy-in from these entities will help outreach to residents by educating new tenants about the building's program and to remind current residents to continue to recycle. Each building is going to have a different set-up depending on the building design, facility capacity and waste management system.

C: To get the transient populations moving through Van Buren County, recycling coordinator worked with the travel bureau to put flyers next to other travel materials to get the word out about the local refuse/recycling service.

Forum 4: Commercial & Industrial Facilities, Bars/Restaurants and Schools

[Overview](#)

Panelists provided information and discuss effective commercial, bar/restaurant, industrial and school recycling efforts.

[Tracy Artley, University of Michigan](#)

The U of M achieved a 35% recycling rate in 2007 with a dual stream recycling with material going to the Ann Arbor MRF. Training, newsletters, talking to students, training custodial staff are keys to success. In addition, dual barrel equipment is utilized to separate recycling and refuse streams. The university is currently moving recycling effort toward a focus on packaging materials and encouraging students to use building block furniture instead of wooden lofts. Stadium recycling effort targets cardboard from vendors and 50 blue carts are made available to patrons during the game (low contamination rates are experienced in carts). Plastic stadium cups are not recyclable. The University will designate a new recycling mascot via a naming competition next year and has an internal recycling competition called "Recycling Champions," which puts buildings on campus against one another. DART picks up their Styrofoam at no cost.

Q: Is there any value to recycling Styrofoam?

A: Styrofoam recycling in rural areas is very important due to the potential of burning it.

Q: What are the blue bins made of?

A: The contamination rate in the blue bins is relatively low due to the large labeling and the restricted lid.

[Jeff Krcmarik, Washtenaw County](#)

Waste Knot is a program that tries to get local business to implement and share green practices. It provides businesses with a platform to discuss the good work they are doing and free marketing for green practices.

The program encourages the purchase of post-consumer products, and requires participants to communicate green policy to employees. Free waste audit are given to businesses and networking workshops are hosted. Member organizations are promoted via local access television and an annual awards ceremony. A business directory is published with businesses that implement green practices. The program is supported with the use of interns and staff time. If you do business with another Waste Knot partner, you receive a 10-15% discount on the service. The theme of the program was “get the recognition you deserve,” which encourages business to market themselves by emphasizing the good work they are doing.

Q: What is your budget?

A: Sponsors and partnerships fund the program. The annual budget is roughly \$17,000.

Q: How do you identify the criteria that partners have to use?

A: The application outlines the criteria to which a participating business must be able to answer yes.

Q: How did this program start/originate?

A: It started with a solid waste plan update. They needed to identify other ways to reach new objectives and goals set forth in the solid waste plan.

Q: Are the interns paid?

A: Yes, they are paid \$10-\$12/hr

[Jeff Roberts, Resource Recycling Systems, Inc.](#)

RRSI's Environmental Leadership program was described in detail. Organizational integration requires a team regardless of the size of the entity, which will focus on integrating green policies into management, purchasing, and operations. Data management must track metrics, materials, and economics. Data sources are vendors, purchasing/procurement, and operational staff. An environmental scorecard rates the success of the collected data and helps identify areas that need improvement. It must be specified in contracts what data is necessary in order to receive data most useful to your program/organization.

Forum 5: Odd & Ends

Overview

Open forum and facilitated discussion allowing for topics or issues suggested by participants before or during the event.

Markets

Paper is steadily increasing in value from \$80/ton. If you can get \$100 a ton, you can tell residents that truck collection is paid for by recycling #8 paper. There is an increased acceptance for co-mingling due to the demand of paper in overseas markets.

Glass (currently about \$18/ton) is heavy and dangerous. Portage County pays \$15/ton to have glass hauled off site for processing.

Cleantech takes SOCCRA's #3-#7 **plastics**, which may be sent to Vietnam to be hand sorted and shipped to China for processing. Facilities in NC are taking all plastic bottles, but are careful to say that they are only recycling #1 and #2. The PRF's are taking the #3-#7's, but not enough to say that all are being recycled. WMX is bailing #3-#7 mixed plastics and shipping them somewhere. There is a need to promote what happens after the material is dropped off at the recycle bin.

The Green Dot system in Germany focuses on products entering the country are fully recyclable. The National Recycling Coalition is working on a national level to “re-brand” recycling and develop a legally defensible symbol on packaged product.

Forming a cooperative can help smaller rural communities market their materials by increase volumes. Rural communities tend to have high participation rates.

Odds & Ends

Rural communities need help with transporting C&D to recycling facilities.

Akron Solid Waste District has a permanent HHW drop off facility. They are struggling with working with private haulers to increase recycling rates in areas not serviced by municipalities. Monroe County maintains extensive partnerships with other agencies in the county and hosts free HHW collections. The challenge is that they are a rural community and it is difficult for them to get a hauler to reliably collect their materials. Wayne County is looking to establish a permanent HHW site. Plymouth Township is working to increase participation in multi-unit family housing.

Schools

60-70% of the Allen Park residents recycle and is working to engage schools and commercial entities in the program. Detroit is currently in a pilot program with 6 elementary schools. There is no residential curbside program which hinders the education process of recycling. Students will have a steep learning curve to understand the importance of recycling and proper methods of recycling. The Ohio State Extension has a strong residential recycling program but they would like to get more commercial entities and schools.